

Finalising unpaid fines (Report 10: 2017–18). Tabled 22 February 2018.

Slide 1: Welcome

This is a presentation about the performance audit report on finalising unpaid fines.

Please note that this is a summary. The full report can be read on our website.

Slide 2: Audit objective

In this audit, we assessed the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector entities in finalising unpaid fines owed to the state, such as traffic or tolling infringement notices and monetary orders such as court-ordered fines.

We assessed whether entities:

- collect sufficient, relevant and accurate debtor data
- are effectively managing unpaid fines
- use efficient practices and processes that prioritise timely finalisation, and
- work together to effectively finalise unpaid fines (noting, a fine can be finalised in a number of ways, including: payment, cancellation or writing off the debt).

Our audit included:

- Department of Transport and Main Roads (DTMR)
- Queensland Police Service (QPS), including the Traffic Camera Office
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG)
- State Penalties Enforcement Registry (SPER).

Slide 3: Context

Public sector entities issue fines to penalise people who have deliberately or inadvertently broken the law, and to deter them from committing similar offences. Most people do pay their fines, but some cannot afford to pay, and others willfully choose not to.

This figure shows as at 30 June 2017, approximately \$1.2 billion dollars is owed to the state from four and a half million unpaid fines.

The challenge for issuing and collection entities is in efficiently and effectively finalising fines that remain unpaid, particularly for those people who refuse to pay.

Slide 4: What we found

Between 2012 and 2017, we found that:

- QPS and DTMR collected payment for less than half the infringements they issued, and these rates showed no improvement.
- For the fines that have been referred to SPER, the agency's effectiveness in finalising them remained relatively steady, but it has not kept pace with the high volume of tolling fines issued in 2014–15 and 2015–16.

Slide 5: Working collaboratively to collect fines

While the public sector entities responsible for issuing, referring and managing the fines do work together, better coordination and practices across the end-to-end fines process is needed to improve finalisation.

This is due to:

- delays in recording fines in the system, which makes it difficult for some people to pay fines early
- limited follow-up of unpaid fines by DTMR and QPS
- delays by DTMR to refer unpaid fines to the SPER
- delays by the SPER to commence enforcement action and not assess the effectiveness and cost of its actions, and
- failure to write off aged and unrecoverable debt.

Slide 6: The future

SPER, with the cooperation of issuing and referring entities, has driven legislative, administrative and structural changes to help improve their collection and finalisation of unpaid fines.

Some of the benefits of these changes are starting to take effect (such as vehicle immobilisation) and others will take some more time before the benefits are realised.

Slide 7: What we recommend

We made recommendations to:

- improve the end-to-end fines collection process
 - reducing the time taken to record, refer and enforce fines
- identify opportunities to automate processes, improve debt recovery and manage problematic debtors
- review the tolling framework to better manage tolling debts
- develop processes to assess the cost and effectiveness of enforcement actions
- assess and write off aged and unrecoverable debt in accordance with the revised debt write off guidelines.

Slide 8: For more information

For more information on these recommendations, and the issues, challenges and opportunities highlighted in this summary presentation, please see the full report on our website.

Thank you.